



News Release



Shelby County Health Department

814 Jefferson Ave., Memphis, TN 38105

NUMBER:

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

www.shelbycountyttn.gov

DATE:

Friday, May 4, 2012

CONTACT:

Risk Communication Coordinator
(901) 270-7179

Health Department Issues Ozone Advisories to Protect Citizens with Asthma

MEMPHIS, TN – As we approach the summer months, the Shelby County Health Department (SCHD) reminds citizens high ozone levels have a significant impact on citizens with asthma and other respiratory illnesses. The SCHD Pollution Control Section monitors ozone levels daily to determine if a Code Orange, Red or Purple advisory should be issued for the following day. Typically, the Memphis Metropolitan Area maintains a Green or Yellow ozone level; however, during the long and hot summers, the region occasionally experiences high ozone levels that can trigger ozone advisories.

The Pollution Control and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Programs (PHEPP) work together to notify the public through various media outlets, including television, print and social media, as soon as advisories are issued. Code Orange, the most frequent of the advisories, directly affects sensitive groups such as those with asthma or other respiratory illnesses, young children with developing lungs, elderly and active adults who spend extended time outdoors. Codes Red and Purple, while highly rare, will affect all citizens, with sensitive groups suffering the effects more quickly and to a greater degree.

Ozone levels become unsafe when emissions from vehicles, industry, power plants, lawnmowers and other sources combine with sunlight. This usually occurs in the warmer months while winds are light with little or no cloud cover. While industry and power plants control pollution through Health Department and EPA regulations, there are many steps citizens can take to help reduce air pollution. "The Health Department strongly encourages citizens of the Mid-South to follow the "COOL 5" - five easy ways to immediately reduce components of ozone," says Mike Goldstein, Meteorologist for the Health Department. "It is equally important for citizens to continue to stay informed of the current and forecasted ozone levels so they may protect themselves should they be in a sensitive group."

The "Cool 5" are as follows:

1. *Share the Ride* - Carpool or use public transportation (MATA) to reduce the number of vehicles on the road (MATA offers 25 cent bus and trolley fares for forecasted Code Orange/Red days ONLY).
2. *Link the Trips* - Combining your errands at one time will not only save gas, but will reduce vehicle miles traveled and therefore, air pollution.
3. *Don't Idle Your Car* - You will save gas and reduce air pollution by turning engines off if idling for more than 30 seconds (not for use in traffic). Avoid using drive-through entrances.
4. *Mow When the Sun is Low* - Lawnmowers are among the dirtiest engines, as they don't have the same emissions restrictions as automobiles. By mowing your lawn after 7pm, you can reduce the ozone levels since ozone needs direct sunlight to form.
5. *Stop at the Click* - The vapors that are released into the air are components of ozone. By stopping at the click when your gas tank is full, it will not only reduce air pollution (vapors get forced out of the tank after the first click), but it will keep the vapor recovery system in the car in good working order.

In addition to television, radio and print media, air quality alerts are posted on interstate TDOT digital billboards and can be found online at www.airnow.gov. To receive alerts directly to your smart phone, you can follow PHEPP on Twitter @SCHDResponse.